

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9303

INFO AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

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E.O. 11652 N/A

TAGS: PFOR, AFSP, US, UR

SUBJECT: CUSTOMS INSPECTION OF PERSONAL EFFECTS OF U.S.

ADMINISTRATIVE TECHNICAL STAFF

REF: 75 MOSCOW 17630, 75 STATE 294130,

1. AS SUGGESTED IN 75 STATE 294130 THE EMBASSY MADE ANOTHER APPROACH TO MFA POINTING OUT THE COURTESIES EXTENDED BY U.S. CUSTOMS TO SOVIET ADMINISTRATIVE AND TECHNICAL STAFF ASSIGNED TO WASHINGTON. WE STRESSED THAT ON A RECIPROCAL BASIS SOVIET CUSTOMS SHOULD EXTEND SIMILAR COURTESIES TO MARINES ASSIGNED TO MOSCOW. MFA AGREED TO LOOK INTO THE MATTER.

2. THIS WEEK MFA (TRIFONOV, CHIEF BILATERAL SECTION, USA DIVISION) ADVISED THE EMBASSY ORALLY THAT SOVIET LAW REGARDING CUSTOMS RIGHT TO INSPECT THE PERSONAL EFFECTS OF ADMINISTRATIVE AND TECHNICAL PERSONNEL "COULDNOT BE WAIVED." EMBOFF REPLIED THAT WE WERE NOT QUESTIONING SOVIET CUSTOMS RIGHT OF INSPECTION, BUT WE WERE ASKING FOR RECIPROCAL TREATMENT. TRIFONOV SUGGESTED WE HANDLE PENDING SHIPMENTS IN THE NORMAL MANNER. ON JANUARY 29 WE REQUESTED THE RELEASE OF PERSONAL EFFECTS (ONE SUITCASE) OF AN INCOMING MARINE. THEY WERE RELEASED TO US WITHOUT CUSTOMS INSPECTION, BUT ON FOLLOWING DAY CUSTOMS ADVISED THIS WAS ERROR--AT THEIR REQUEST WE RETURNED SUITCASE.

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3. ON JANUARY 30 THE EMBASSY ATTEMPTED TO SHIP OUT THE PERSONAL

EFFECTS OF TWO MARINES WHO DEPARTED MOSCOW SEVERAL WEEKS AGO. THE CUSTOMS AUTHORITIES INSISTED ON INSPECTION OR A CALL FROM MFA REQUESTING THEIR RELEASE. OUR EMPLOYEE ACCOMPANING THESE PERSONAL EFFECTS CALLED THE EMBASSY WHICH IN TURN CALLED MFA (TRIFONOV) WHO DECLINED TO TAKE ANY ACTION STATING AGAIN THAT "SOVIET LAW COULD NOT BE WAIVED". THE EMBOFF THEN REPLIED THAT WE WOULD WITHDRAW THE SHIPMENTS UNOPENED AND SEEK INSTRUCTIONS FROM THE DEPARTMENT. TRIFONOV EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT THE MATTER WOULD NOT BE MADE ONE OF PRINCIPLE.

4. TRIFONOV ALSO SUGGESTED THAT THE MATTER BE A TOPIC IN THE UP-COMING US/SOVIET CONSULAR DISCUSSIONS. COMMENT: WE HAVE NO OBJECTION TO THIS PROPOSAL AND PLAN TO DO SO, BUT IT WILL NOT PROVIDE A SOLUTION FOR SEVERAL MONTHS AT LEAST. END COMMENT.

5. THE DEPARTMENT'S VIEWS AND GUIDANCE ARE REQUESTED ON AN URGENT BASIS AS CONTINUING HOLD-UP OF BAGGAGE IS CAUSING PERSONAL HARDSHIP FOR MARINES CONCERNED.

STOESSEL

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